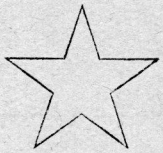
The Second Coming *of the* Christ



The Second Coming of the Christ

According to the prophecies in the New Testament

A Lecture by

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The Universal Expectations

In six at least of the world's great religions there are traditions and prophecies of the coming of a World-Teacher to help humanity when it is prepared to receive Him and when He is urgently needed. The changes that in our own days have been going on everywhere around us[1] are so sweeping and so far-reaching, that the long slumbering expectations of the coming of the Great One are universally awakened. In the East the Hindus await the Jagat-Gurn and the tenth Avatâra of Vishnu; the Buddhists look forward to the coming of Maitreya Buddha; the Parsees expect another Zoroaster; the followers of the Prophet of Arabia foresee a new Teacher like Mohammad, but a greater Islam. In the West, as well as in the East, the scattered tribes of Israel wait and pray for the arrival of Messiah, and among the Christian nations the second coming of the Christ is fervently and confidently looked forward to.

The different world scriptures mention certain signs that are to precede and announce the coming of the Blessed One. In the Old and the New Testament many such signs are mentioned. Are any of those foreshadowings to be seen in our days?

The Prophecies

Let us go to the authorities and see. Leaving out the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, which have special reference to the *first* coming of the World-Teacher, let us begin with the first of the synthetic gospels, that according to St. Matthew. There (*Matth.* 16.27) Jesus is quoted as saying:

[1] See on this subject *The Changing World* (1910) and *The Immediate Future* (1911) by Mrs. Annie Besant. Also Mr. C. W. Leadbeater's *The Inner Life*, II (1911), pp. 357-362 in the Chicago edition.

"The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his work."

In another chapter (24) we are told:

"And Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily, I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples (Peter and James, John and Andrew; *Mark* 13.3) came to Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? *And what shall be the signs of Thy coming,* and of the end of the world?"

Here three different subjects have been put together:

1) the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem;
2) the second coming of the Christ; and
3) the end of the world (the destruction of the fifth root race continent, to use Theosophical terminology).

The narrative continues:

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of war. See that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (*Matth.* 24.4-14.)

To Bible students it is a well-known fact that St. Matthew without any strict chronological order puts together words and acts of the Christ, gathering in one place what to him appears in some way similar. Dr. Joseph Armitage Robinson, a well-known English scholar, Dean of Westminster, writes in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th edition, Vol. XV, p. 355) that "he (St. Matthew) groups his materials with small regard to chronological order; and he fashions out of the many scattered sayings

of our Lord continuous discourses, everywhere bringing like to like, with considerable literary art."

The following sayings of the Christ refer evidently first and foremost to the destruction of the temple:

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains. Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day; for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (*Ibid.*, vv. 15-22.)

After this He speaks of His second coming as follows:

"Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert, —go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers,— believe it not." (*Ibid.*, vv. 23-26.)

There have already been many men who have pretended to be the Christ—from Barcochebas in the second century to Sabbatai Zevi in the seventeenth, and up to George Jacob Schweinfurth of Rockford, Illinois, and Cyrus Romulus Teed of Chicago in our own time. "By their fruit ye shall know them"; by their own words and deeds they shall all be judged. Josephus tells us that in the first century of our era many "wizards and impostors persuaded the multitude to follow them into the desert," exactly as the Christ had foretold.

The Second Coming

Thus He describes the second coming of Himself:

"As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of these days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven. And then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory. And He shall send His angels with

a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." (*Ibid.*, vv. 27-33.)

In the symbolical language of the Orient we are here told how suddenly the Christ will come back when the time is ripe, just as the eagles will come, when there appears a prey to swoop down upon. There will be "tribulation" and evil times, calling upon *Him,* the Lord of Love and Prince of Peace, to come and make an end to it. Darkness deepens in the dark age (the Kali yuga, the Iron age), before He returns, Who is Light. It is said that the night is darkest just before the sunrise. The falling of the stars symbolizes the instability of what before seemed so fixed and stable. That the Christ is said to come "in the clouds of heaven with power and glory" symbolizes what we might call the spiritual evolution, the fact that a greater outflowing from the spiritual realm is at hand. His angels are His Messengers, each and all; those who forcefully, faithfully announce His return. And when His Messengers announce Him, the elect (those who are ready to receive Him) will prepare to meet Him, will come and listen to His teaching.

In taking up our text again, we find the Christ saying:

"Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." (*Ibid.*, vv. 34, 35.)

In the first century of our era many of the followers of the Christ seem to have thought that His second coming and the end of the world were to follow in quick succession after the destruction of the temple. There is nothing that warrants such an interpretation. Whether "this generation" refers to the Jews or to the Aryan race, it is true that both still live to receive the Great One, Whose second coming is thus foretold.

The day and the hour of His return only One knows, says the Christ Himself, as quoted by St. Matthew.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but My Father alone." (*Ibid.*, v. 36.)

Signs of His Coming

Then some signs are mentioned:

"As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into

the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." (*Ibid.*, vv. 37-41.)

Prepare For His Coming

Watchfulness and preparation are necessary, says the Christ.

"Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily, I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (*Ibid.*, vv. 42-51.)

The Prepared and the Unprepared

The parable of the ten virgins also points out how necessary it is to prepare for the coming of the Christ and to watch for Him.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, lord, open to us. But he answered and said,

Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh." *(Ibid.,* 24. 1-13.)

Use Your Talents

One way of preparation for His coming is to use the talents He has given unto us. That is taught in the next parable.

"The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went out and traded with the same, and made other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed. And I was afraid, and went and hid my talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (*Ibid.,* vv. 14-30.)

When the Christ Returns

St. Matthew describes the return of the Christ as a day of reckoning and of last judgment, just as if that were to be the end of "this generation." It is a "weighing of the heart," like the one described in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. We read:

"When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee? or thirsty, and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you: Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me.

Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into eonian fire,[2] prepared for the devil[3] and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you: Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into eonian punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." (*Ibid.*, vv. 31-45.)

That He is described as "coming in His glory," and that He "shall sit upon the throne of His glory," signifies that He comes with greater divine powers than before. The "holy angels" are His Messengers. In this our own time

[2] The Greek text has *aionion*, "eonian," lasting an eon, *i. e.*, a long time; it does not mean "everlasting," as the word used to be translated. Fire symbolizes sorrow, suffering, purification.

[3] The word devil means "the adversary," the one who opposes the divine work of the Christ.

of quick transportations, of easy communications, with its telegraphs and telephones, "all nations" can gather before Him with less difficulty than 2,000 years ago. That the peaceful, the faithful, those "who listen to the voice of the shepherd," are likened unto sheep, and that the restless, unruly and faithless, those "who do not listen," are called goats, is quite easy to understand. That He separates the prepared from the unprepared and lets only those who are ready enter His kingdom, judging all of them by what they have done to "one of the least" of His brethren, presents Him to us as divinely wise and divinely just.

In the gospel according to St. Mark we read (ch. 13) the same prophecy of His return, mostly in the same words as in the first gospel. Yet there are some additions, which we will quote.

"Take heed to yourselves; for they shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten. And ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what you shall speak, neither do ye premeditate. But whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; but it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death." (*Mark* 13.9-12.)

"Of that day and that hour (when the Christ is to come back) knoweth no man, no not the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, I say unto all: *Watch!*" (*Ibid.*, vv. 32-37.)

With simplicity and great forcefulness it is here pointed out that the safest way is to expect the coming of Christ *always,* and to live according to that expectation, lest we be taken unawares. This is one reason why we should watch and wait for Him *now,* even if we don't know the very day or hour nor even the year of His return. And another reason for it is, that around us just now we see the different signs of His coming, as they are given in the New Testament by Himself and His disciples.

To the high priest Jesus also spoke of the second coming, as we read it in the same gospel.

"Again the high priest asked Him, and said unto Him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (*Ibid.*, 14.61, 62.)

In the gospel according to St. Luke the same things are told by the Christ about His second coming.

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to have been broken through. Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour ye think not.

"Then Peter said unto Him, Lord, speakest Thou this parable unto us, or even unto all? And the Lord said, Who then is that wise and faithful steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the men-servants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (*Luke*, 12.35-38.)

In a later chapter we read:

"And when Jesus was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;

neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you. And He said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there. Go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto Him, Where, Lord? And He said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." (*Ibid.*, 17.20-37.)

Throughout the whole of the fourth gospel, that according to St. John, resound the last words of the Christ that are recorded in the first gospel: *"And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."* (*Matth.* 28.20.) Less is there spoken by the Christ about His return; and whatever there is, here it is quoted:

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (*John*, 14.1-3.)

"I will not have you comfortless; I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me. Because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." (*Ibid.*, vv. 18-20.)

"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you." (*Ibid.*, v. 28.)

"A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father." (*Ibid.*, 16.16.)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice. And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour hath come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." (*Ibid.*, vv. 20-22.)

The last mention of the return of the Christ in the gospel according to St. John is given thus:

"Then Peter, turning about, seeing the disciple whom Jesus loved following, which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die. Yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die, but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (*Ibid.*, 21.20-23.)

The Prophecies of the Apostles

In the Acts of the Apostles the return of the Christ is spoken of thus:

"And when He (Jesus) had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (*Acts*, 1.9-11.)

In the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians he says:

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God." (*I Cor.*, 4.5.)

In speaking of the second coming of the Christ he says:

"Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling

of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (*Ibid.*, 15.51-55.)

This points to the result of true discrimination. At the second coming of the Christ there will be a *realization* of what is the real, the incorruptible, the immortal, and what is the unreal, the corruptible, the mortal. Thus "we shall all be changed."

In his letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul writes:

"The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then suddenly destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day shall overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (*I Thess.*, 4.16-18; 5.1-6.)

This points out, that the Christ when He returns will come with greater power and to make more sweeping changes than last time. It also points out how necessary it is to be watchful and to avoid the thoughts and words and deeds of darkness.

"Now we beseech you, brethren," St. Paul wrote later on, "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first; and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remem-

ber ye not, that, when I was with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that He may be revealed in His time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even Him, Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (*II Thess.*, 2.1-12.)

Who is that Man of Sin, that Son of Perdition, that Wicked One, that Satan, here spoken of as appearing before the Christ?

Materialism, denying the Divine, ridiculing unselfishness, "opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped," that monster has already appeared in the world, after the year 1859 proclaiming his own interpretation of the discoveries of Alfred Russell Wallace and Charles Darwin. The materialistic philosophy has been "sitting as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." He came with "all power and signs and lying wonders," trying to demonstrate that matter is the only real, because objective and concrete, and that spirit, or force, is only an attribute of matter, because subjective and abstract. The watchword of this Wicked, this Antichrist, is *competition,* "struggle for existence," fighting against each other as enemies, whereas the watchword of the Christ is *cooperation,* working together and helping each other as brothers, having everything in common, because we are all one in Christ.

In the epistles of St. Peter, the writer speaks to "the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia," "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time; wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (*I Peter,* 1.5-7.)

Further on he writes: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (*Ibid.,* v. 13.)

He describes the coming of the Christ in almost the identical words of his Master:

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and goodliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." *(II Peter,* 3.10-13.)

In the epistle of St. James, the Lord's brother, we are asked to acquire the virtue of *patience* before the Christ returns.

"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned; behold, the judge standeth before the door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." *(James,* 5.7-11.)

The first epistle of St. John gives a clue to the false as well as to the true prophets.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God;* and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world." (*I John,* 4, 1-3.)

In the Book of Revelation we read a good deal about the return of the Christ.

"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." *(Rev.,* 1.7.)

"That which ye have already hold fast till I come." (*Ibid.,* 2.25.)

"Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (*Ibid.*, 3.11.)

"Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." (*Ibid.*, 22.7.)

"And, behold, I come quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." (*Ibid.*, v. 12.)

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." (*Ibid.*, v. 17.)

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* (*Ibid.*, v. 20.)

He Comes to Preach the World Religion

That the Christ comes to preach the World-Religion and to unite every nation is plainly foretold in the gospel according to St. John. The faithful are there also spoken of as sheep by the Great Teacher.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them; but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before Me are thiefs and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. *And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and One Shepherd.* (*John*, 10.1-16.)